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National Popular Vote - HB 6163

March 11, 2011

Co-Chairs Senator Slossberg and Representative Morin, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in **favor** of HB 6163. My name is Paul Filson and I am Director of the Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council. SEIU represents over 55,000 members in Connecticut.

Grassroots organizing is vital for any group of people hoping to have an effect on politics. It is, of course, a trusted tool of the labor movement in our work on behalf of working families.

When it comes to the election of the President, however, the rules of organizing are warped substantially. For a "safe" state like Connecticut, the benefits of citizen engagement are actually erased within our borders. For example, when the union in CT wants to get involved in a presidential election, we are probably going to drive or hire a bus to New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania or another swing state, rather than talk to our own members in Connecticut.

It is an unfortunate fact that only a few states truly matter in Presidential elections.

Because presidential candidates stand to gain the same seven electors from Connecticut whether they win by 51% or 90%, a candidate who is certain to win will feel that showing up and listening to voters here isn't worth the time. The same goes for any candidate who is certain to lose. This makes no sense, and causes Connecticut to be ignored again and again.

Beyond the political argument in favor of changing a system that excludes so many of us, and sends Connecticut to the sidelines, we must be mindful of the problem of political equality. Today every vote is not equal in our country.

Moreover, this inequality serves no purpose. Unlike what we may have been taught in high school civics classes, the current system does not, in practice, give special weight to any state, nor protect small states. New Hampshire is a small state that happens to be closely divided, and therefore candidates will go there to ask for votes—but never to Rhode Island or Vermont. Ohio is very large state that is closely divided, and so candidates will go there—but never to Texas. Fully two thirds of our states, large and small, red and blue, are thought of as nothing more than flyovers at worst, and ATMs at best.

We ought to elect the president the same way we elect every other office in the United States—according to the principle of one person one vote. NPV gives us the mechanism to do just that. Our votes will count and so will Connecticut.